**CLAIMS:**

What is claimed is:

1. A system for mitigating an effect of an inoperable servo reader on a tape drive, comprising:

a read and write head assembly, said read and write head assembly including a plurality of servo read elements, wherein at least one servo read element of said plurality of servo read elements is inoperable;

a tape, said tape including a plurality of servo tracks; and

a track following servo system, said track following servo system coupled to said plurality of servo read elements, and operable to:

collect tape distortion information associated with said tape;

derive a track following offset value associated with said tape distortion information; and

position at least one operable servo read element of said plurality of servo read elements proximal to at least one servo track of said plurality of servo tracks and with said track following offset value applied.

2. The system of Claim 1, wherein said plurality of servo read elements comprises two servo read elements.

3. The system of Claim 1, wherein said tape distortion information comprises a value N, and said track following offset value comprises N/2.

4. The system of Claim 1, wherein said tape distortion information comprises position error signal (PES) data.

5. The system of Claim 1, wherein said tape distortion information comprises position error signal (PES) data from at least one servo track of said plurality of servo tracks.

6. The system of Claim 1, wherein said tape distortion information comprises position error signal (PES) data from separate servo readers of said plurality of servo readers to produce a composite PES value.

7. The system of Claim 1, further comprising at least a second read and write head assembly, said second read and write head assembly including a second plurality of servo read elements, wherein said second read and write head assembly is operable to collect said tape distortion information associated with said tape.

8. The system of Claim 1, wherein said plurality of servo read elements comprises a plurality of bumps, and one bump of said plurality of bumps includes said at least one inoperable servo read element.

9. The system of Claim 1, wherein at least one servo track of said plurality of servo tracks comprises at least one of a magnetic track and an optical track.

10. A method for mitigating an effect of an inoperable servo reader on a tape drive, the method comprising the steps of:

collecting tape distortion information associated with a tape;

deriving a track following offset value associated with said tape distortion information; and

positioning at least one operable servo read element of a plurality of servo read elements proximal to at least one servo track of a plurality of servo tracks and with said track following offset value applied.

11. The method of Claim 10, wherein said plurality of servo read elements comprises two servo read elements.

12. The method of Claim 10, wherein said tape distortion information comprises a value N, and said track following offset value comprises N/2.

13. The method of Claim 10, wherein said tape distortion information comprises position error signal (PES) data.

14. The method of Claim 10, wherein said tape distortion information comprises position error signal (PES) data from at least one servo track of said plurality of servo tracks.

15. The method of Claim 10, wherein said tape distortion information comprises position error signal (PES) data

from separate servo readers of said plurality of servo readers to produce a composite PES value.

16. A computer program product in a computer readable medium for use in a data processing system, for mitigating an effect of an inoperable servo reader on a tape drive, the computer program product comprising:

instructions for collecting tape distortion information associated with a tape;

instructions for deriving a track following offset value associated with said tape distortion information; and

instructions for positioning at least one operable servo read element of a plurality of servo read elements proximal to at least one servo track of a plurality of servo tracks and with said track following offset value applied.

17. The computer program product of Claim 16, wherein said plurality of servo read elements comprises two servo read elements.

18. The computer program product of Claim 16, wherein said tape distortion information comprises a value N, and said track following offset value comprises N/2.

19. The computer program product of Claim 16, wherein said tape distortion information comprises position error signal (PES) data.

20. The computer program product of Claim 16, wherein said tape distortion information comprises position error signal (PES) data from at least one servo track of said plurality of servo tracks.